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FIRST ANNUAL SURVEY OF CRITICAL ISSUES IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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During the decade of the 1980s teacher education encountered intense pressure to reform. Virtually every state has enacted legislation or initiated administrative policies which have affected teacher education in important ways. Some states have decreased certification requirements, others have increased them, and several states have done both for different reasons. Perhaps the most significant attention is being focused on states, such as Texas and Virginia, which have actually placed explicit limits on the maximum allowable size of baccalaureate professional education programs. During this same period an expanding research and knowledge base has changed the content of teacher education. These external and internal pressures for reform have raised compelling professional issues which teacher educators need to address.

As the only professional organization to specialize in teacher education with individual memberships of both school based and university personnel, the Association of Teacher Educators represents a bellwether of opinion. The organization's Board of Directors commissioned the development of this annual survey to assess members' perceptions and allow for the collection of data for future longitudinal studies. The format for this first edition of the report has three parts. Section One includes the development of the instrument. Section Two reports the findings. The final section discusses the results.

Survey Development

A modified Delphi technique was used to develop the survey. A representative sample of 100 ATE members, selected from standing committees and including racial and ethnic minority groups, was asked to generate teacher education actions for the survey instrument. Submissions were collected during the Fall 1988, and a master list of 68 unduplicated items was identified.

A jury of twelve experts* further refined the instrument during the 1989 ATE conference. During the Spring 1989, 19 items were selected for the first survey. A twentieth item was constructed which requested respondents to select and rank order the five items they perceived the most critical. Finally, a request for selected demographic information was added and the survey was finalized.

The national ATE office mailed the instrument to about 3,000 ATE members during the late Spring 1989. A total of 944 surveys were received by August 1989. An additional 138 returns, received after the data were analyzed, were not included in the study.

Respondents to the survey were primarily university faculty and administrators (84.4%), while 8.5 percent were teachers and administrators in precollegiate schools, and 7 percent classified themselves as other, indicating they were in private

Table 1
Participants

	Educational Group	Number	Percent
Group 1:	K-12 Teachers and Administrators	80	8.5
Group 2:	College Professors	511	54.1
Group 3:	College Administrators	286	30.3
Group 4:	Others	67	7.0
Total		944	99.9

practice, state departments, federal governmental agencies, etc. All had identified themselves as teacher educators by virtue of their identification of ATE as their professional association.

Findings

The primary items, with subsections, yielded 30 scores. A four-point scale was used which included two positive items (4-Agree and 3-Somewhat Agree) and two negative ones (2-Somewhat Disagree and 1-Disagree). A mean score of 2.5 indicates overall agreement with an item, while a mean score of 2.49 and below reflects disagreement. Participants agreed with 23 of the 30 items scored. Table 2 includes each item, its mean score, standard deviation, and rank score in terms of the extent of respondents' agreement or disagreement.

Participants believed that national certification would improve the prestige of teaching, giving this item (10 C) the highest score in terms of agreement. However, they rated the two other items related to national certification much lower; issue 10 A (national certification would improve the quality of teachers certified) was ranked 24th and issue 10 B (national certification would improve the quality of programs) ranked 23rd. Thus, while participants believe national certification would affect the perception of teacher education, they also believe it would do little for the substance of teacher education.

There was strong agreement with the criteria used for admission to teacher education; GPA, personal interviews, recommendations, and basic skills tests ranked 2nd, 3rd, and 4th in agreement. Direct experiences with children as a criteria of admission was ranked 13th.

The lowest rated issues were related to teacher preparation being conducted by classroom teachers through their unions (ranked 29th) and by school districts (ranked 30th). Respondents do not believe that future teachers need a working knowledge of Spanish (issue 12, ranked 28th). Also, they do not believe that current programs are preparing teachers for multiethnic, multicultural settings (issue 20, ranked 27th), or for urban schools (issue 22, ranked 26th).

Respondents were asked to rank the five issues they believed were most critical. These responses varied somewhat from the rankings for the issues on the index of agreement and disagreement. The scoring of the responses awarded five points to an issue ranked first, down to 1 point for an issue ranked fifth.

The **five highest rated issues** were as follows:

- First, *teacher education programs must include mentoring beginners during their first year of practice* (issue 18, 1438 points). This refers to what happens to preservice teachers after they have completed their university programs and secure employment.
- Second, *teacher education will not be improved until the conditions of practice in schools are improved* (issue 19, 1357 points). Respondents perceive that reform in the schools is necessary to go along with change in teacher education.
- Third, *preparing teachers for multiethnic, multicultural settings is being accomplished in current programs of teacher education* (issue 11, 1229 points). Respondents clearly perceive that this is an important condition. A mean score of 2.14 in the agreement-disagreement index (see Table 2) indicates that respondents do not believe this is being accomplished within the structure of current teacher education programs and that additional effort in this area is needed.

Table 2

Index of Agreement-Disagreement with Critical Issues in Teacher Education

(4-Agree; 3-Somewhat Agree; 2-Somewhat Disagree; 1-Disagree)

	Issue	Mean	SD	Rank
1.	The research literature in education is a useful basis for teaching students to teach.	3.39	.73	11
2.	All teacher education programs should teach a common core of pedagogical knowledge.	3.30	.84	14
3.	Classroom teachers (through their unions or associations) should be able to offer programs of teacher preparation.	1.79	.97	29
4.	School districts should be able to offer programs of teacher preparation.	1.78	.98	30
5.	All teachers should have a major field of academic study in addition to teacher education.	3.15	1.01	17
6.	In order to be licensed all candidates should be required to pass an examination:			
	A. Basic skills	3.50	.87	7
	B. General education	3.36	.97	12
	C. Content knowledge of teaching field	3.48	.88	8
	D. Pedagogy	3.42	.91	10
7.	Admission to programs of teacher education should require an evaluation of students:			
	A. GPA	3.65	.61	2
	B. Recommendations	3.59	.67	4
	C. Personal interviews	3.61	.64	3
	D. Basic skills tests	3.58	.72	5
	E. Direct experiences with children	3.33	.89	13
8.	All education faculty who teach future teachers should have at least three years of classroom teaching experience.	3.55	.76	6
9.	Being NCATE approved means that the teacher education programs being offered are better than those offered in institutions not approved.	2.41	1.11	25
10.	National certification would improve:			
	A. The quality of teachers certified	2.42	1.08	24
	B. The quality of programs offered	2.47	1.08	23
	C. The prestige of teaching	3.92	1.08	1
11.	Preparing teachers for multiethnic, multicultural settings is being accomplished in current programs of teacher education.	2.14	.94	27
12.	Future teachers should have a working knowledge of Spanish.	2.05	.99	28
13.	Preparing effective teachers for urban schools can be accomplished by currently existing programs of teacher education.	2.26	.98	26
14.	Special programs are needed to attract candidates to specializations in which there is a continuing shortage.	3.28	.80	15
15.	Minority students should be given special assistance in:			
	A. Forgivable loans	2.90	1.10	21
	B. Scholarships	3.25	.97	16
16.	An effective teacher can be adequately prepared in a regular four year undergraduate teacher education program.	2.91	1.11	20
17.	Deans of Schools/Colleges/Divisions of Education:			
	A. Are knowledgeable teacher educators	2.83	1.01	22
	B. Place a high priority on teacher education	2.99	1.00	19
18.	Teacher education programs must include mentoring beginners during their first year of practice.	3.44	.79	9
19.	Teacher education will not be improved until the conditions of practice in the schools are improved.	3.04	.98	18

✎ The item ranked fourth, *admission to programs of teacher education should require an evaluation of students . . .* (issue 7, 1128 points);

✎ and fifth, *in order to be licensed all candidates should be required to pass an examination in . . .* (issue 6, 973 points) indicate that respondents believe that entry and exit criteria are of critical importance. In addition, respondents appear to believe that the most typical criteria currently in use are the ones which should be used.

The **issues respondents regarded as less critical** were also items with which they disagreed:

✎ *Future teachers should have a working knowledge of Spanish* (issue 12, 74 points) had the lowest critical issue point total and ranked 28th on the agreement-disagreement index.

✎ Respondents are also strong in their belief that teacher education is a university function and not a responsibility of school districts or professional associations. Issue 4, *school districts should be able to offer programs of teacher education* (205 points); and issue 3, *classroom teachers (through their unions or associations) should be able to offer programs of teacher preparation* (231 points) were the next lowest items in score.

✎ The value and importance of NCATE was questioned. Issue 9, *being NCATE approved means that the teacher education programs being offered are better than those offered in institutions not approved* (265 points) was the fourth lowest score.

✎ Finally, issue 17, *Deans of Schools/Colleges/Divisions of Education: Are knowledgeable*

Table 3
Differences in Perception Among Groups of Educators

	Critical Issue	Chi Square	p	Cramer's V	Differences Attrib. To
3.	Classroom teachers (through their unions or associations) should be able to offer programs of teacher preparation.	86.421	.0001	.176	Teachers Agree
4.	School districts should be able to offer programs of teacher preparation.	146.386	.0001	.229	Teachers Agree
7A.	Admission to programs of teacher education should require an evaluation of student's GPA.	18.793	.027	.082	Teachers Disagree
10A.	National certification would improve the quality of teachers certified.	17.415	.043	.080	Others Agree
14.	Special programs are needed to attract candidates to specializations in which there is a continuing shortage.	20.580	.015	.086	Teachers Disagree Others Disagree
15B.	Minority students should be given special assistance in scholarships	42.954	.0001	.124	Coll. Adm. Agree Teachers Disagree
17A.	Deans of Schools/Colleges/Divisions of Education are knowledgeable teacher educators.	21.268	.012	.087	Others Disagree
17B.	Deans of Schools/Colleges/Divisions of Education place a high priority on teacher education.	52.881	.0001	.140	Coll. Adm. Agree Coll. Prof. Disagree Teachers Disagree
18.	Teacher education programs must include mentoring beginners during their first year	31.505	.0001	.108	Coll. Adm. Agree

teacher educators; and place a high priority on teacher education received the fifth lowest score (275 points).

To determine the extent of agreement among the four identified groups within the study (see Table 1) a Chi Square test was run for all thirty items. A significant difference of opinion was identified for nine of the issues. Table 3 includes the issues for which there was significant difference of opinion.

Issues 3 and 4 deal with control of teacher education. School teachers and administrators agree that professional organizations and school districts should be able to offer programs of teacher preparation. However, college professors, administrators, and others do not agree in allowing this non-traditional route.

All responding groups agree that admission to teacher education programs should require an evaluation of students via recommendations, personal interviews, basic skills tests and direct experiences with children. However, while university professors, administrators and others perceive a value in also using the student's grade point average school teachers and administrators disagree (issue 7 A). However, this issue still had the second highest overall agreement with a mean of 3.65.

Respondents also disagreed on one of the three questions pertaining to national certification. Issue 10 A indicated that national certification would improve the quality of teachers certified. All groups, except others disagreed with this statement. The others group agreed.

Issue 14 specified that special programs are needed to attract candidates to specializations in which there is a continuing shortage. School teachers, administrators and others disagreed. The school teachers and administrators also disagreed with the additional responding groups who favored giving minority students special assistance via scholarships (issue 15 B).

The two issues regarding education deans also sparked discord. Issue 17 A indicated deans are knowledgeable teacher educators. The others group disagreed with this premise. Issue 17 B suggested that deans placed a high priority on teacher education. The university administrators agreed with this statement; however the professors, and school teachers and administrators disagreed.

Finally, university administrators agreed that teacher education programs must include the mentoring of beginners during their first year of practice.

Discussion and Implications

The two issues which respondents ranked as most critical for improving teacher education refer to conditions beyond their control as university faculty and administrators. Respondents seem to be saying that beginning teachers must have mentoring during their first year of teaching but that this is not the responsibility of the university. Because the sixth most frequently selected item maintains that teachers can be prepared in regular four-year undergraduate programs, it is reasonable to assume that respondents feel that while mentoring is the most critical issue, it is something for which public schools and not the university should be accountable. University administrators might see a greater need for mentoring than university faculty because they are more likely to receive complaints from the public schools. This issue should be studied further.

The respondents seem sensitive to the need for teacher education to occur in multicultural settings. They do not believe this is being done within the structure of present programs. Since there are extremely few minority university faculty (outside of the traditionally black institutions) and since most teacher-preparing institutions are in small towns, rural areas or in small cities, it is problematic that the students currently prepared in these universities are, indeed, being prepared in the multicultural settings perceived necessary by the respondents. One explanation for this response might relate to the definition of multicultural. Some teacher education institutions may perceive that their students are in a multicultural setting if there are one or two minority children/youth in a cooperating school; others would not consider a cooperating school multicultural without at least a substantial number of diverse students representing multiple cultures with at least some minority classroom teachers. Clearly, the respondents believe more significant effort needs to be made in addressing the issues of multicultural education.

The entry and exit criteria reflect typical university and state requirements. The fact that the respondents regard these issues as being of critical importance may reflect their perceptions that who becomes a teacher is of paramount importance. Respondents' agreement with the entry requirements apparently reflects their belief that these criteria predict who will succeed in their teacher education programs. Respondents' high level of agreement with the exit criteria is more difficult to rationalize because there is no research to connect these criteria with subsequent effectiveness in teaching practice.

Teachers reject the use of GPA as an admissions criteria while college faculty and administrators do not. This may reflect the fact that teachers are more keenly aware of the lack of a documented connection between success in college courses and subsequent teaching. At the same time it may indicate that university faculty believe college grades are at least reflective of a motivational level and potential for success even if this relationship has not been clearly established.

The fact that respondents overwhelmingly agree with regular four-year programs supports the context in which most of them work and implicitly rejects the notion that extended programs will improve quality. There is no way of determining whether respondents believe that an academic major and a professional major can be accomplished in this four-year period. Since 81 per cent of America's elementary education majors are still prepared in four-year institutions (as of June, 1989) it is likely that many of the respondents had the elementary education pattern in mind when they indicated agreement.

While there were divided perceptions about how knowledgeable education deans are, there was general agreement (except among university administrators themselves) that education deans do not give teacher education a high priority. This viewpoint is common in research-oriented institutions where doctoral programs, external grants and advanced programs for preparing a range of school specialists are offered. That this finding should also occur in this sample of respondents from predominantly teacher-preparing institutions is indeed noteworthy. The question of just what these deans' priorities are is worthy of future study.

There is little confidence among respondents in the substance of national teacher certification. While respondents agree that professional prestige may be raised they are, as yet, unconvinced of any substantive impact of this effort on either university programs on the quality of teachers produced. This skepticism may reflect the lack of influence of any federal/national efforts heretofore.

It seems clear that ATE membership does not support many of the current criticisms of teacher education nor many of the proposals being made for its improvement. If this interpretation is correct, the membership is both chary of change proposals and dubious regarding the quality of leadership in teacher education.

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*Jury of Experts

Dr. Cassandra Book, Michigan State University; Dr. Douglas Brooks, Miami University (Ohio); Dr. Gloria Cherney, Council on Post Secondary Education; Dr. Lewis Ciminello, Indiana University Northwest; Dr. Rochelle Clemson, Maryland, Department of Education; Dr. Edith Guyton, Georgia State University; Dr. Kenneth Henson, Eastern Kentucky University; Dr. Francisco Hidalgo, California State University at Long Beach; Dr. Howard Hill, Phi Delta Kappa; Ms. Shari Smith, Tulsa, Oklahoma; Ms. Mary Lou Swenburne, New London, Connecticut; and Dr. Doyle Watts, Lamar University.

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